

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y F O R M R N 3157 V I C E 315

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, PN, PQ

SUBJECT: PRESS FUROR OVER USCINCSOUTH INTERVIEW

SUMMARY: PUBLICATION LOCALLY AND IN MIAMI HERALD
ON MAY 1 OF AN AP STORY DEALING WITH READINESS OF U.S.
MILITARY FORCES IN CANAL ZONE HAS PROVOKED A STORMY
REACTION IN PANAMA. AN OFFICIAL GOP COMMUNIQUE ACCUSES
LT. GEN. MCAULIFFE OF "OPEN INSUBORDINATION", AND ONE
NEWSPAPER IS INTERPRETING THE STORY AS A DELIBERATE USG
ATTEMPT TO SEND A HEAVY-HANDED MESSAGE TO PANAMA ON THE EVE
OF THE FORTHCOMING NEGOTIATING ROUND. AS NEARLY AS WE CAN
DETERMINE, MOST OF THE QUOTATIONS IN THE AP STORY ARE A MONTH
OR MORE OLD AND THE TIMING OF ITS RELEASE WAS COINCIDENTAL. END
SUMMARY.

1. SEMI-INDEPENDENT PANAMA CITY "STAR AND HERALD" AND
"ESTRELLA" FOR SUNDAY MAY 1 BOTH CARRIED ON UNDATED AP (HAL
MOORE) BYLINER DEALING WITH READINESS OF U.S.
MILITARY FORCES STATIONED IN CANAL

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ZONE. THE ARTICLE QUOTED LT. GEN. MCAULIFFE, USCINCSO; MAJ.
GEN. RICHARDSON, COMMANDER, 193RD BRIGADE; COL. ANTHONY LOPEZ,
SOUTHCOM PAO; AND AN UNIDENTIFIED US SOLDIER ("MY PANAMIAN
GIRL FRIEND COMPLAINS WHEN I COME BACK FROM THE FIELD WITH
SO MANY BUG BITES...BUT IF IT EVER
COMES DOWN TO A FIGHT DOWN HERE, I KNOW I'LL BE READY.")

2. ARTICLE WAS CARRIED AS LEAD IN "STAR AND HERALD", BUT LESS PROMINENTLY ON PAGE 1 OF "ESTRELLA". IT ALSO APPEARED IN MAY 1 "MIAMI HERALD". WHICH IS WIDELY READ IN PANAMA.

3. LOCAL PAPERS DID NOT PUBLISH MAY 2 DUE TO MAY DAY HOLIDAY. SNIPING FROM GOP-GUIDED PAPERS BEGAN TUESDAY, MAY 3."CRITICA" PRINTED AP ARTICLE UNDER HEADLINE "MCAULIFFE MENACES PANAMANIAN PEOPLE", ACCOMPANYING IT WITH AN EDITORS NOTE ROASTING THE STORY AS "THE MOST ARROGANT WE HAVE HEARD FROM THE IMPERIALIST FORCES STILL STATIONED IN THE CANAL ZONE" (FBIS/PANAMA PA 031511Y). "MATUTINO" BRANDED IT INFANTILE PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE" (FBIS/PANAMA PA 031653Y).

4. ON MAY 3, GOP OFFICIAL NATIONAL INFORMATION COMMISSION RELEASED A COMMUNIQUE ACCUSING LT. GEN. MCAULIFFE OF BEING IN "OPEN INSUBORDINATION AGAINST THE PENTAGON" AND WANTING "TO CREATE HIS OWN PRIVATE WAR". COMMUNIQUE INCLUDED EXTENSIVE CITATIONS OF STATEMENTS BY GEN. BROWN AND FROM "COMMANDER'S DIGEST". COMMUNIQUE WAS CARRIED ON BROADCAST MEDIA EVENING OF MAY 3, AND WAS PRINTED PROMINENTLY IN ALL MORNING PAPERS MAY 4 LEAD STORY IN "ESTRELLA" AND "STAR AND HERALD). HEAD OF NATIONAL INFORMATION COMMISSION IS PANAMA'S TREATY NEGOTIATOR AND PERSONAL TORRIJOS ADVISER ROMULO ESCOBAR BETHANCOURT. FULL TEXT FILED FBIS/PANAMA PA 040318Y.

5. "CRITICA" EXPANDS THE MATTER ON MAY 4 INTO A FULL-BLOWN CAMPAIGN AGAINST SOUTHCOM AND PARTICULARLY LT. GEN. MCAULIFFE. ITS COVERAGE INCLUDED LEAD EDITORIAL AND COLUMNISTS BLASTING THE MCAULIFFE INTERVIEW; ANNOUNCEMENT THAT GOP FORIEGN MINISTRY WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONDUCTING A FULL INVESTIGATION OF "PROVOCATIVE ACTS"; A SERIES OF MAN-IN-THE-STREET RESPONSES TO THESE "THREATS"; AND ANOTHER FULL REPRINT OF THE AP ARTICLE, ALONG WITH THE MAY 3 EDITORS' NOTE, "BY POPULAR DEMAND".

6. "CRITICA" LEAD ARTICLE IS HEADED "GRINGO TROOPS READY TO INVADE PANAMA". THE ARTICLE BEGINS WITH A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH SOUTHCOM PAO. IT CALLS AP AN AGENCY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF SECRETARY VANCE."ANALYSTS OF THE PANAMANIAN-AMERICAN SITUATION CONSIDER THAT VANCE IS CREATING A SITUATION OF TENSION IN A MANNER SUCH AS TO, AMONG OTHER THINGS, BREAK UP THE NEGOTIATIONS." ARTICLE GOES ON TO LINK THIS AP STORY INTO A PATTERN WITH OTHER RECENT EVENTS INCLUDING: ALLEGEDLY DISCRIMINATORY ASPECTS OF THE QT ASSURANCES TO CANAL EMPLOYEES; THE IRIBERRI-MILITARY POLICE INCIDENT; AND RECENT US ARMY MANEUVERS ON BRIDGE OF AMERICAN. IT CONCLUDES: "HOW MR. CYRUS VANCE IS DECEIVING US."

7. COMMENT: AS NEARLY AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE THE AP ARTICLE AND THE UNFORTUNATE TIMING OF ITS PUBLICATION WERE A RESULT OF INADVERTENT JOURNALISM. ABSENCE OF A DATE ON THE STORY INDICATES TO US THAT AP MOVED IT PRIMARILY AS A BACKGROUNDER. IT IS UNSURPRISING THAT "STAR AND HERALD/"ESTRELLA" CHOSE IT AS A LEAD DOWN HERE, IN VIEW OF ITS SUBJECT MATTER AND TIMING. THE LAST INTERVIEW THAT LT. GEN. MCAULIFFE IS KNOWN TO HAVE GIVEN TO AP TOOK PLACE A MONTH OR MORE AGO. THE ARTICLE'S AUTHOR, HAL MOORE, WAS LAST ON THE Isthmus, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, LAST FEBRUARY. THE REMAINDER OF THE QUOTED MATERIAL IS A PASTICHE OF REMARKS WHICH COULD NORMALLY BE EXPECTED-- IN THE CONTEXT OF FULL INTERVIEW--FROM THE OFFICIALS CONCERNED; NONE APPEARS FUNDAMENTALLY INACCURATE IN ITSELF. BUT PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER IN THIS PARTICULAR WAY, AND PUBLISHING IT AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME, MAKES IT SOUND OMINOUS TO A PANAMANIAN AUDIENCE. SOUTHCOM ADVISES THAT IT HAS NO PLANS TO SAY ANYTHING

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OFFICIAL ON THIS MATTER AT THIS TIME. WE ARE EXPLAINING AS OCCASION PRESENTS ITSELF WHAT WE KNOW OF THE GENESIS OF THE AP STORY, AND DENYING THAT IT WAS INTENDED IN ANY WAY AS A MESSAGE FOR PANAMA.

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Message Attributes

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